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The Political Construction of Latino Nomenclatures in Twentieth-Century New Mexico

PHILLIP B. GONZALES

While the idea of a “traditional” culture may connote an inert inheritance, that of ethnic identity involves situational dynamics, strategic calculation, and the construction or reconstruction of cultural meaning. At one point in his classic essay on modern ethnic identity Isaacs (1989:73) turns to the matter of the collective names that groups select for themselves and observes that “in the stream of our current experience, the cash value of names has been fluctuating with great and unusual violence. Names keep turning up in one way or another in all the ongoing rediscoveries, revisions, remaking, and reassertions of group identities.”

The use of a name would appear basic to any instance of ethnic identification but, as a matter of choice, it is by no means simple. The American Southwest has seen an ongoing turnover of many Latino nomenclatures, chief among them being “Mexican,” “Spanish,” “Chicano,” and “Hispanic.” As Miller (1976:235) sees it, these particular labels

tend to be rooted in historical periods—periods discernible first in terms of the predominant definitions and images ethnic members have of themselves and their place in the social structure, and second in terms of those definitions conferred by the broader society. As these conceptual definitions are altered over time, some labels tend to lose currency and may even develop unfavorable connotations, while others (which during an earlier period may not have been appropriate and demeaning) gain wide acceptance. The process may then go full circle when emergent symbols, necessarily those charged with extensive ideological implications, become highly popular representations and aid in facilitating redefinitions of ethnic identity.

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This passage suggests a need to investigate the cycling of Latino nomenclatures in historical periods. For such a purpose, it is the “necessarily . . . ideological implications” of nomenclature that would appear key. The political nature of ethnic name adoption is becoming increasingly recognized. Examining the debate among ‘Coloureds’ in South Africa, Wallerstein (1991:78), for example, concludes that “pastness” in the sense of history represented by a particular name, “is a mode by which persons are persuaded to act in the present in ways they might not otherwise act. Pastness is a tool persons use against each other.”

In this view, the nomenclatures utilized by ethnic minorities in particular appear as competitive devices for garnering institutional resources. They are also, however, normative constructs that, in the hands of active proponents, vie for cultural hegemony¹ across the groups being referenced and their sociopolitical environments. They thus form part of the arsenal for gaining and sustaining leadership within the ethnic “political community” (Breton 1991).

This approach concerns itself with greater political realities. At issue is the relation between a labeling pattern and its background conditions, including but not restricted to dominant power alignments, structures of political economy, and sociocultural ecology (Wallerstein 1991; Hannan 1979; Roosens 1989).

This article takes such a political perspective to the modern history of Latino nomenclatures in New Mexico.² The cross tracks of Latino identity have been sharply etched into New Mexico. Particular nomenclatures have appeared with varying degrees of prominence and effect without completely supplanting the others. This article cannot address all the major aspects of historical Latino labeling in this particular state. It is concerned with some examples of labeling use by Latinos as seen through the politics of their times. The investigation seeks to clarify the dynamics of identity in the Southwest as it looks for the variety of political circumstances that can affect the role of ethnic nomenclatures historically.

1. “Labeling hegemony” is distinguished from “ethnic hegemony,” Jiobu’s (1988) concept of an ethnic minority establishing an economic niche in a host society.

2. I am using the term “Latino” to characterize the nomenclatures in the Southwest precisely because it has yet to assume a political role in New Mexico which, for present purposes, gives it a kind of objective utility.

HISTORICAL OUTLINE

Between 1598 and 1821, Spain claimed New Mexico as its northernmost New World province. After Mexico won its independence from Spain in 1821, New Mexico formed an official department of the Mexican Republic. The U.S. assured its conquest of the Southwest in 1848, and in 1850 New Mexico became an official U.S. territory. At this point, New Mexico's 60,000 Mexican citizens abruptly became American citizens. Anglo migration to New Mexico was minimal but strategically powerful in the nineteenth century (Nostrand 1992). The territory thus remained largely Latino in population and mass culture even as the U.S. maintained strict political control. New Mexico remained a territory for sixty-two years, finally gaining statehood in 1912. With completion of the railroads in the 1890s, the Anglo population in New Mexico quickly increased to 50 percent by 1940. New Mexico's integration into the American social system progressed steadily. To this day, however, it remains among the more politically, economically, and culturally marginal states of the United States.

"Spanish American" Hegemony, 1900–1933

In the Southwest, New Mexico is distinguished by the extent to which the controversial Spanish ("Spanish American" and "Hispano") nomenclature has prevailed among the state's historic Latino population. It was in the seventeenth century that the classic Castilian identification arose and spread throughout the Spanish-speaking world. As Israel (1975:82) says, "A mania for purity of blood and purity of blood certificates to show that their lineage was free from the taint of either Moorish or Jewish blood swept Spain and later, the Indies too" (see also MacLauchlan and Rodriguez O. 1980). In early colonial New Mexico, it appears that the term *español*, as reflected in church documents, was applied to anyone who was not a full-blooded Indian or a member of the important *genízaro* category of detribalized Indians. Lower-class villagers were known as "provincial Spaniards," as opposed to the "courtly Castilian of the Europeans and educated people." The children of mestizo marriages often "progressed" to the higher caste of their parents (Horvath 1977:28, 29, 31). Also, the Hispanic appellation *gente de razon* referred to those village communities that had documented lineage to

Spanish land grants (Swadesh 1974: ch. 2).³

Mexican independence sought to uproot Castilian identification. The use of racial classifications declined sharply in New Mexico after 1821, at least among the clerics who had traditionally noted them in matrimonial records. When referents were applied between 1821 and 1849, the most common were “Mexicano” and “Mexicana” (Gutierrez 1980:145–49). But even as New Mexico became part of the Mexican nation, the label “Spaniard” did not abruptly disappear after 1821 (Nostrand 1976: 148). The record indicates its usage in the nineteenth century by Mexican and later territorial officials wanting, apparently, to present a Europeanized view of New Mexico to U.S. audiences (Gregg 1962:76; Horgan 1975:234; Larson 1968:172).

It was around the turn of the twentieth century that the Spanish nomenclature began its rise to prominence. By the 1920s, the “Spanish American” referent was the exclusive public designation of the Spanish-surnamed citizen of New Mexico. By the 1930s, the “myth” of a historic Spanish culture in New Mexico flourished (Chavez 1984:96).

Why did the Spanish nomenclature attain hegemony at this time? There is a rather standard, oft repeated explanation that Latinos adopted “Spanish” in defensive reaction to anti-Mexican prejudice (Campa 1946; Fergusson 1951; Metzgar 1974). The Anglos arriving from Texas and Oklahoma did not distinguish between Spanish-surnamed citizens and Mexican nationals. As Mexican immigration to the Southwest became more noticeable, a lowering of social status resulted for the Spanish-speaking citizen. The newly emerging middle and upper class developed a Castilian consciousness to ward off the stigma of being Mexican (Gonzalez 1969:203). According to Campa’s (1946:13–14) well-known formulation, “Spanish-American” serves a triple purpose: “It lifts from the New Mexican the opprobrium of being a Mexican; it makes him a member of the ‘white’ race, and expresses his American citizenship. . . . The whole thing is characterized by anomalies which attempt to justify prejudices and defense mechanisms.”

In this basically psychological explanation, the Spanish American nomenclature sought acceptability. For Campa (1946:15), the question was one of truth or falseness. He discounted the notion that the “descen-

3. McAlister (1963) documents the way that the difficult process of settling colonial lands was turned into a new form of nobility for non-Indians regardless of class status.

dants of conquerors” could have any basis for group definition, particularly because the people in general referred to themselves as *mexicano*, not *español*, when speaking Spanish. The corollary was that it was Anglos who preferred an ideal Castilian Southwest. Suggesting that the culture content of the Spanish Heritage was originally an Anglo insistence, critical historians regard the romantic portrayals of the Spanish colonial halcyon by American historians and writers as both simple prejudice and a justification for the American conquest of the Southwest (Servin 1973; Weber 1973).

Since the accommodation theory first appeared, primary researchers have noted real instances of Anglos coupling Mexican prejudice and Castilian affect (e.g., Rosenbaum 1981:97, 203). In a particularly instructive example, Wilson (1981:96) notes in his architectural and cultural history of Santa Fe that up through the 1880s, the *Daily New Mexican* “rarely used the term ‘Spanish-American,’ and then only to describe the upper level of the local society.” Only when Spanish-surnamed people voted for an Anglo business initiative did the *New Mexican*, “which had ridiculed a certain backward element of the Mexican population before the vote, congratulated young Spanish Americans for coming down on the side of progress.” The rooting of the Spanish nomenclature was thus facilitated by the same process that Carey McWilliams (1949: ch. 2; see also Pitt 1971) observed in California, where Los Angeles’s tourist industry promoted the “landmarks movement” to preserve the old Spanish missions and the pre-American “halcyon days” of Spanish California. The tourist industry in Santa Fe was initiated by the railroad in 1880. By 1921 a general disdain for local Mexican culture in the Anglo establishment was replaced by a romantic, ennobling view to suit Santa Fe’s new image as a reservoir of the past (Wilson 1981:106).

To the effects of regional development must be added the national ideological forces which contributed in suppressing a public Mexican nomenclature. Mexican American loyalty to the United States had always been at issue in Anglo eyes (Melzer and Mingus 1984:110–12), particularly by the reactionist charge of “unAmericanism” starting with T. Roosevelt’s conflict with Spain (Mount 1983:381–96). The tension and conflict that characterized U.S.–Mexico relations during the Mexican Revolution added to the pressure to identify oneself as American. While Panco Villa’s raid on Columbus, New Mexico, in 1916 served the Mexican revolution, it mitigated a political Mexican nomenclature in the U.S. In addition to equating “Mexican” with “anti-American revolution-

ary,” U.S. reaction noted the amount of labor organizing in the fields and mines of the Southwest and came to define Mexicans as communists. New Mexico’s own U.S. Senator Albert Fall spearheaded a virulent anti-Mexican policy in 1919 accusing Mexicans of introducing Bolshevik propaganda through labor organizing in the Southwest ([Albuquerque] *Evening Herald*, December 3, 1919).

On the dominant Anglo side, the Spanish nomenclature thus originally served to herd Latinos within a civic fold while leaving the foreign and threatening sense of “Mexican” to operate on a negative plane of social control. New Mexicans saw little choice but to adopt Americanism in their nomenclature. In 1921, for example, U.S. Congressman Nestor Montoya spoke on the topic of New Mexico’s Spanish-language newspapers and emphasized that “it cannot be said of a single Spanish-American newspaper that by one word or sentence they were disloyal to the actions taken by our country at any time.” The newspapers urged a “purely American viewpoint as to justice and rights,” he said. To prove it, Montoya referred to the large number of Spanish Americans who enlisted in Roosevelt’s Rough Riders, to the thousands who served during World War I, and to the fact that “the first regiment of Americans formed after the Mexican invasion [at Columbus] consisted of one-half Spanish Americans” (*U.N.M. Weekly*, February 25, 1921).

Montoya’s Spanish nomenclature clearly accommodated American dominance. But were psychological comfort and political accommodation the only purposes that the Spanish nomenclature served at this time? The problem is the suggestion that Latino self-labeling involved a minority group docilely conforming to an Anglo American dictate. A close reading of the record, however, shows key constructions of heritage in ways quite apart from Anglo tourist trading, ultra patriotism, and the other forms of dominant culture defining. At some point, it needs to be recognized, Latinos themselves took charge of the work of defining culture in New Mexico according to their own views of what the Spanish nomenclature might signify and in response to what they perceived as their collective interest.

Take, for example, the vitally important work of Aurelio Espinosa, who began publishing the results of his linguistic dissertation in 1911. Espinosa found that New Mexico’s dialect and folklore derived from the culture that was implanted on New Mexican soil during Spain’s golden literary age. Espinosa’s work represented scientific proof for the claims of Spanish culture in New Mexico, and he was called upon by the histor-

ical societies to publicize his work (Espinosa 1911:1). Espinosa has been called an accommodationist who identified with the Anglo "aggressor" (Limon 1987:15). What is generally overlooked about Espinosa's early scholarship and popular writing is the symbolic import of the fact that it centered on the poor village folk of northern New Mexico among whom, Espinosa argued (1909, 1911, 1914), the major vestiges of classical Spanish language and custom had been humbly retained for three hundred years. Espinosa was sensitive to the stereotyping of the common folk, whose Spanish, he argued, was "not a vulgar dialect, as many misinformed persons believe, but a rich archaic Spanish dialect, largely Castilian in source" (Espinosa 1911:1). Espinosa's peasant focus contrasts with romantic projections of militaristic conquistadores, dashing Spanish dons, señoritas under demure mantillas, and other images of an idealized Castilian empire.

This does not mean that Hispanos did not rely on these images themselves; they often did. But it is to highlight their distinct initiative in devising nomenclature. In time, for example, the grouping that Espinosa first examined in his scholarship would get transformed into New Mexico's version of "the noble poor." Witness Nina Otero's iconography. "The Spanish descendant of the *Conquistadores* may be poor," Otero wrote in *Old Spain in Our Southwest* (1936:319), "but he takes his place in life with a noble bearing, for he can never forget that he is a descendant of the Conquerors."

If powerful symbols are important political weapons then, in effect, Hispanos can be said to have "seized the means of symbolic production" (Heinz 1983:137) that Anglo society had encouraged and which was already available in the nature of political labeling in the Latino New World. Note in this regard that Otero, who was a lifetime activist known particularly for her work on behalf of woman's suffrage (Jensen 1981), also associated the "poorer people" with what was often alleged to be another Castilian trait in New Mexico, namely a love of politics. "The Spaniard is interested in politics," she said, "because it has a dramatic climax" (1936:30). The cultural allusion may be contrived, but the political referent is crucial. Without a sense of how politics figured in, it is not possible to fully understand the installation of "Spanish" as the central Latino nomenclature in New Mexico at this time.

Politics, in turn, must be seen against the background of the social changes that were greatly affecting New Mexico just before and just after the turn of the century, particularly the overriding effect of the movement to gain statehood, which finally won out in 1912. Hispano

leaders reportedly opposed statehood in the late nineteenth century for its potential threat to local ways of life (Larson 1968:202).⁴ But the momentum to statehood, starting in 1898, would not be stemmed. In the thirty-odd years after the railroads inaugurated a new technological world, New Mexico was transformed from frontier territory to full member of the union. In the process, “New Mexico” experienced its political crystallization by the collective work that went into legislation preparatory for statehood, including the Fergusson Education Act of 1898, the Knox Omnibus Bill of 1902, and the Enabling Act of 1910. Territorial officials promoted New Mexico’s indigenous heritage to make it culturally palatable to U.S. sensibilities (Gutierrez 1989). Finally, the Constitutional Convention that required representation from throughout the territory was staged in 1910 (Larson 1968: chs. 12–17).

Social scientists have noted the connection between ethnic identity and the transition from a pre-modern to a modernizing political economy. Initially, where modernization affects a periphery, it will shift the center of economic and political activity away from the village, township or kin system that had been shaping agrarian life, to larger, more rational arenas. In this view, “What is general [in the competitive arenas of modernization] is the development of solidarity patterns extending over wider ranges of humanity than ever before” (Anderson, von der Mehden, and Young 1974:30). Among subordinate minority groups, a politicized ethnicity is stimulated by the disruptive forces of economic and political change. An effective competitive edge requires a scale of identity to match the newly rising economic and political marketplaces (Olzak and Nagel 1986). To establish a competitive edge under conditions of change, ethnic groups need to construct their heritage to square with the emerging geopolitical frameworks. Without such a correspondence to structure, a particular nomenclature will have difficulty legitimizing itself in the greater political context, will lack the logical coherence needed to recruit new adherents, and will diminish its chances for acceptance (Hannan 1979:253–75).

Where modernization intrudes on a periphery, it will tend to exclude indigenous people from effective participation in the economy but will leave the political system open for penetration (Nagel 1986:97). From this perspective, statehood for New Mexico created a whole new arena

4. Moreover, here the same old prejudice came into play by the accusation national opponents tended to make that New Mexico was “too Mexican” to be deserving of statehood (Melzer 1987; Larson 1968:177, 179).

for political competition. To project a politically effective heritage, the Spanish-surnamed needed a public identity that could rationalize claims to right of participation and equality in the state. This helps account for the appearance of "Nativo" and "Nuevo Mejicano," terms that helped set the stage for the Spanish nomenclature. Already by the 1890s, with the mass migration of Mexicans to the U.S. still at least a decade away, New Mexico nativity was being popularized in Spanish-language editorials, poems, and songs (Meyer 1978:84).

Impending statehood portended the rapid expansion of Anglo American control in New Mexico at the same time that the importation of racial prejudice was palpably evident in the region. In this regard, the strategic expression of Spanish American identification was actually a protest, not an accommodation. Thus, in 1911, Octaviano Larrazolo (a Mexican by birth who came to New Mexico as a youth) prominently resigned from the Democratic party, charging it with prejudice and using Castilian imagery to implicitly and ironically symbolize potential Spanish American mobilization. "I have not come to you to ask you to wage war, my friends who are descendants of the noble conquistadores, with the Anglo-Saxon race," Larrazolo told an Hispano-dominated Republican crowd, "for these Anglo-Saxons have come out to this land with their enthusiasm, to build up this great and glorious and illustrious empire" (quoted in Cordova 1950:34). If the latter part of the statement reflected U.S. loyalty, the first carried an implicit threat that Anglos would have to earn Spanish American respect.

As statehood sharpened the parameters of political life within circumscribed borders, Latinos witnessed the rapid influx of Anglos and feared for their equal representation in the state. It was at this level that the need for a competitive political nomenclature became primary. The phase of New Mexico's cause for statehood coincided with the national Progressive Era. Progressivism played a major part in the heat of debate about which political direction New Mexico should take as a state. In this connection, American progressivism aided the competitive requirements of Spanish identification. An important interest group at the 1910 Constitutional Convention was the sizable delegation of Spanish-speaking representatives whose major concern, the welfare of their traditional customs and culture, complemented the Anglo progressive agenda. The Hispanos succeeded in winning voting and educational safeguards for that New Mexican segment that the constitution calls "those of Spanish descent" (Larson 1968:177, 276, 279–80; see also Sedillo n.d.).

Spanish-surnamed citizens constituted more than half the population during this period,⁵ but their average representation in the state legislature for the same period steadily declined from a high of 44 percent in 1918 to 29 percent in 1939 (Padilla and Ramirez 1974:212). It was in this context that organizations like El Club Politico Independiente took root. Between 1926 and 1930, this Spanish American organization pressured both Democrats and Republicans to make half their statewide tickets Spanish-surnamed, especially in view of what it considered to be anti-Hispanic legislation being supported by old guard conservatives in both parties. For the election of 1928, for example, El Club demanded that the Democratic party nominate Spanish Americans for U.S. senator, U.S. congressman, lieutenant governor, secretary of state, superintendent of public instruction, and one member of the state corporation commission (Gonzales 1985:180–81; Lujan 1987:33–36).

The competitive version of Spanish identification lasted in New Mexico until the early 1930s. During the 1931 session of the state legislature, after an Anglo legislator had argued for a reapportionment bill by alluding to the power that was vested in the Latino-dominated northern counties, State Senator Remigio Lopez issued a challenge by exclaiming, “My people are resentful of [the accuser’s] remarks. They find embodied in those remarks . . . a venomous threat they cannot and will not disregard . . . of a political race war—a move by the old guard republicans and their associates to relegate the Spanish-American people of the state to a state of virtual political serfdom and oblivion” (*Albuquerque Journal*, March 14, 1931).

By calling into question the impact of Americanization, Spanish American rhetoric sometimes reflected its own ethnic nationalism. In 1933, for example, Spanish Americans from throughout New Mexico mobilized to legally abolish the fraternities and sororities at the University of New Mexico on the charge of racial prejudice. The attempt was unsuccessful. The case demonstrates, however, the oppositional edge that “Spanish American,” “Hispano,” and “Nativo” identifications once had, as in the protest that was put to “those [Anglo] usurpers who come into our beloved land of our inheritance with their prejudiced minds pretending to be superior in class to our ancestors” (Gonzales 1986:294).

5. It should be noted that the rate of migration into New Mexico from Mexico during this period was a minuscule 3 percent (Hernandez-Alvarez 1966), which helped to rationalize the Spanish homeland identification.

Marginalized Nomenclature: From the New Deal to the Early Sixties

From the 1890s to 1933, the rise of the Spanish American nomenclature turned on the need to establish a competitive footing in the organization of the state political structure. But with the Depression and the New Deal, the conditions of identity formation changed. Embracing the New Deal, New Mexico Latinos massively defected the Republican party, which had previously maintained a competitive Spanish American nomenclature, for the Democratic party (Fincher 1950:103–9). Roosevelt's victory in 1932 shifted the local political focus to the patronage and administration of New Deal programs. The key link here was Dennis Chavez. Chavez, a Latino U.S. congressman who was appointed New Mexico's U.S. senator in 1935 was "responsible for bringing the New Deal to New Mexico" (Lujan 1987:552). Controlling millions of dollars in New Deal programs, Chavez's Democratic machine (Gomez and Coy 1988:11, 15) redefined the central political game for Latinos in New Mexico and started a period of national impact which World War II made even more powerful (Badger 1989:310).

The Spanish nomenclature remained fixed in New Mexico, e.g., in the state's official logo, in local ceremony, and as the everyday form of reference among the people (Gonzalez 1969; Wilson 1981; Bustamante 1982). On the cultural front a number of books by Spanish Americans appeared on the topic of Spanish culture in New Mexico, books which nostalgically evoked a passing Hispano life (Jaramillo 1941; Lucero-White 1947; Cabeza de Baca 1954). Rather than focusing on the "noble poor" of the north as the Progressives had emphasized, these nonpolitical, noncompetitive works conservatively emphasized culture as headed by a benevolent *rico* class. Even Aurelio Espinosa's *España en Nuevo Mejico*, a language primer published in 1937 and reissued until 1956, all but neglected the author's original focus on the village people.⁶

6. The writer, Fray Angelico Chavez, did take the villager as his point of departure, but his writing on the *penitente* flagellant element of New Mexico indicated a fissure in the ongoing attempt to spell out the Spanish Heritage. Chavez criticized Aurelio Espinosa, who he said had "joined the crowd" of those who had linked the *penitente* order with "Oñate's Conquistadores and the Third Order of St. Francis" (1954:108). Eventually, Chavez (1974) would extend his quarrel, arguing that the *penitentes* formed a "bizarre" sect and were not pure *castizo* in either blood or religious temperament. Amplifying his Franciscan view of the Spanish Heritage, Chavez carried on Spain's classic church-state conflict by arguing that the conquistador element had left nothing to the Castilian culture that would take root in New Mexico.

Politically, an important consequence of the Spanish American struggle over statehood was the establishment of what Knowlton (1975:27–28) calls the New Mexico “leitmotif” of preserving Anglo American control while providing powerful Spanish American leaders “with the prerequisites of political office that their influence requires.” The tension between the Anglo controlled “Little Texas” counties of southeast New Mexico and the Hispano northern sections continued, but where a progressive Spanish Americanism directly challenged local prejudice and ethnic underrepresentation in state office, the Spanish American perspective of the forties feared the charge of betraying national unity and thus shied from explicit raising of these immediate issues. As Zeleny (1944: ch 8) described it, the Hispano and the Anglo had come to a *modus vivendi*, a “gentleman’s agreement” not to openly deal with prejudice in order to avert ethnic conflict.

On the other hand, the matter of discrimination became a major issue throughout the country and the Southwest during World War II. In this regard, Senator Chavez was at the forefront of national Democratic party efforts to draft antidiscrimination legislation in labor, education, and other areas. Chavez also received hundreds of complaints of discrimination from Mexican Americans throughout the Southwest (Lujan 1987:485–88). In this regard, the ethnic issues that did arise in New Mexico’s political system were largely appended to national proposals. An example was the Fair Employment Practices Act, which Chavez introduced into Congress in 1944. Opponents did not want Chavez’s subcommittee to hear Latino complaints of employment discrimination because doing so was said to be playing into the hands of Axis agents in Latin America. As Chavez responded, “My people have never interfered in U.S. relations with Latin America. Has anyone ever seen a Spanish name in a list of saboteurs? Yet, we share with Latin Americans the same historical, racial and religious background.” And again, referring to the victims of discrimination in the Southwest, Chavez defended Mexicans, Latin Americans, and “descendants of Spanish Colonials” (quoted in Duran n.d.:3–4). This expanded Latino identification reflected Chavez’s concern with discrimination on the national level and his key participation in F.D.R.’s Good Neighbor Policy, which sought peaceful relations between the U.S. and the countries of Latin America (Garcia 1989:248; Gomez and Coy 1988:29).

In New Mexico’s own struggle for the FEP, all but one Spanish-surnamed legislator voted in favor; all who voted against it were Anglo.

The rhetoric in the battle was reminiscent of ethnic politics in the twenties, with opponents saying the bill “originated in Russia” and proponents crying out that the legislation was needed or “the heavy influx of Anglo residents from Oklahoma, Texas and other states” would bury New Mexicans. However, the fact was that FEP advocacy reflected a national liberal ideology and so was not pointed enough to openly challenge on the particular ethnic lines of conflict in New Mexico. As one of the legislators told Duran, “. . . not once did we question or challenge the powerful interests in our homeland, nor did we dare mention words like racism . . . for fear we would be chastised and accused of being ungrateful Mexicans” (quoted in Duran n.d.: 20, 17, 27).

This period of Mexican American history in the Southwest is known as the “Mexican American Generation” (Alvarez 1973; Garcia 1989). In New Mexico, a widespread “Mexican American” nomenclature failed to take political root even though it tended to share the contemporary “Spanish American” concern for the right to civic integration (Garcia 1989:42–46). But the term “Mexican” did get some interesting play in 1958 by the same Senator Dennis Chavez. The banner story of New Mexico’s largest newspaper reported that Chavez had offered “words of advice” to newly elected Governor John Burroughs, that a “‘Mexican’ should be named to the State Highway commission . . .” As Chavez was quoted, “I do hope that in his sense of fair play he will appoint so-called Mexicans to state agencies. . . . This would be a sense of fair play, for these Mexicans are the ones who really nominated and elected him to office. . . .” Chavez pushed the point: “A Mexican as such is not entitled to anything. . . . But a Mexican as such should not be deprived of anything either. . . .” (*Albuquerque Tribune*, November 6, 1958; see also November 15).

This “Mexican” reference was a stunning use of nomenclature for a native son whose political apprenticeship took place in the flourishing Spanish American era of the 1920s, who moreover had married an Espinosa and thus into the state’s most notable Spanish American clan. The experienced Anglo reporter who took the story double-checked Chavez’s use of the term “Mexican.” Chavez, according to the report, “. . . said that it was the term he ‘wanted to use.’”

The ensuing controversy represented all manner of positions on the use of ethnic labels. That Chavez’s outburst might seem like an attack on the long-established Spanish nomenclature is suggested by a columnist who reported that “people north of U.S. 66” were seriously concerned

about the senator's use of "Mexican" in view of their obvious Spanish extraction.⁷ An official of the Hispanic organization G.I. Forum defended Chavez's civil rights concern, although his detailed response refrained from adopting any of the names under discussion, being content to use "Spanish-speaking" as need arose. University of New Mexico history professor Frank Reeve, charging Chavez with the stirring of needless race conflict and presuming to educate the senator on matters ethnic, advised Chavez to eliminate all public ethnic terminology "when referring to citizens of New Mexico." Attorney Gilberto Espinosa, Senator Chavez's brother-in-law, privately congratulated Reeve and yearned for the day when total assimilation among the races would arrive. A misguided Anglo citizen from Silver City thanked Reeve for his criticism of the term "Spanish American" which she said was being misused by "Mexicans" in her town, and she congratulated Senator Chavez for using the correct term.

This washing of ethnic laundry occurred on the back of a politically crippled Spanish American nomenclature. It has since been observed that Senator Chavez's most important national work bypassed much of what was happening in New Mexico's remote and often isolated political grass roots (*Albuquerque Journal*, March 24, 1991). In this light, his use of "Mexican" arrived from a broader context, particularly the movement against racial segregation and violation of civil rights in which "Mexican American" was the central ethnic terminology in the Southwest (Lujan 1987:512–15). While discrimination in New Mexico also formed part of Chavez's concern as a U.S. senator (Lujan 1987:488), the fact is that in relation to New Mexico's internal political dynamics, Latino nomenclature during this period was effectively marginalized.

"Chicano" Hegemony, 1964–1978

Particular organizations and leaders of the complex Chicano Movement have been documented whereas the movement's spread as a mass

7. Frank D. Reeve to Dennis Chavez, November 14, 1958. Ezequiel Duran to Frank D. Reeve, November 21, 1958. Gilberto Espinosa to Frank D. Reeve, December 9, 1958. W. F. Moore to Frank Reeve, November 19, 1958. W. F. Moore to Frank Reeve, December 14, 1958. Frank Driver Reeve Papers, Collection no. 158, Special Collections Library, University of New Mexico, box 28, folder 6, items 1, 7, 14, 15, 17. (I am indebted to Ramon Gutierrez for pointing this archival source out to me). Will Harrison, "Inside the Capital," *Albuquerque Tribune*, October 29, 1989. See also *Albuquerque Tribune*, November 18, 1958. *New Mexico Lobo*, November 20, 1958.

phenomenon awaits systematic investigation. The Chicano Movement affected all the Southwest and Mexican American communities in other parts of the U.S. It was both an outgrowth of Mexican American history and another expression of the racial nationalisms that partially defined the leftist sixties throughout the United States. Mexican Americans in the mid-sixties began generalizing particular grass roots issues—such as the farm worker's plight in California, the land grant issue in New Mexico, and local political representation in Texas—into the elements of a vague (and not always consensual) nationalistic identity for people of Mexican descent. The modern term “Chicano” came from the argot of urban Mexican American street life. It connoted rejection of, if not hostility toward, American authority and society; thus its appeal as a politicized nomenclature.

Having had no previous political or nationalistic associations, the Chicano nomenclature in the sixties and seventies was a true construction (Reich 1989). It amalgamated basic Mexican national identity with a nativistic sense of Southwestern culture and homeland. The Chicano Movement appropriated the Aztec mythology of *Aztlan* to embody the Southwestern homeland (Anaya and Lomeli 1989). This occurred just as the nation saw the economic and political rise of the so-called Sunbelt region. In a rough parallel, “Chicano/Aztlan” stood to the developing Southwest as “Spanish” had stood to New Mexico statehood. To be sure, Chicanismo arose in Seattle, Chicago, Milwaukee, and other non-Southwestern locales. As Nash (1989:10) points out, the “meanings associated with the boundary differences among groups need not be, and most frequently are not, isomorphic.” Nevertheless, for a nationalistic nomenclature requiring a territorial reference point, *Aztlan* fit the vital arenas of competition that the new “Southwest” was defining.

The Chicano nomenclature spread through various social levels—grass roots, institutional, and electoral. Yet its distinctiveness was to project a ‘collective representation’ of “a people” (Prager 1982) united by culture and victimized by American imperialism and oppression. The new labels and the ethnopolitical conceptions they represented were adopted as forcefully by New Mexico natives as by others in the Southwest (Bustamante 1982:155).

In the early days of the movement, the “Spanish American” term was sometimes fused with the rising nationalist spirit. In a pamphlet entitled “The Spanish Land Grant Question Examined,” the Alianza Federal de Mercedes headed by fiery Reies Lopez Tijerina, stated, “The Anglos

should realize that the Spanish people of New Mexico are no longer a disunited people, but are united for the first time to recover and preserve their birthright and cultural heritage, and that each day they are getting stronger and more confidence in themselves" (Alianza Federal 1966:18; see also, *Albuquerque Journal*, June 9, 14, 1967).⁸ In part to resolve the contending forces of nomenclature, Tijerina later excavated the old Spanish colonial term "Indo-Hispano." As a symbolic hybrid, however, the term found little favor beyond Tijerina's immediate group and was criticized by Chicano Movement adherents (e.g., Munoz 1989:8).

On the whole, however, "Chicano" hit New Mexico to pose still another challenge to the traditional Spanish American nomenclature (Metzgar 1974). For example, in successfully proposing a Chicano Studies Program at the University of New Mexico, UMAS (the United Mexican American Students) rejected "Spanish," using the classic reaction-to-prejudice thesis to explain original Mexican dissociation and claiming that its usage in New Mexico was an anachronistic carryover. UMAS's core members, it bears mentioning, were native New Mexicans, most of them heirs to Spanish identification. UMAS neatly reflected Chicano regional nationalism when it declared that so-called "Spanish Americans" should look into history and face the fact that "the Chicano" had his origin in Mexico, "whether he now lives in Chihuahua, Taos, San Antonio, Pueblo, or San Diego" (UMAS 1969).

Spanish American identification attempted to counter this blurring of subcultural and regional distinctions by declaring the Chicano nomenclature foreign to New Mexico. One mother, for example, argued against two community leaders who demanded public school reform and bilingual education for her barrio school. "What frightens me," she reportedly said, "is that I think they are trying to line up the Spanish people against the Anglos. We've never had that in Duranes. Maybe it was bad in San Antonio where Mr. Cansino came from, or in Mountainair where Mr. Ballejos came from but we've all grown up together in Los Duranes. I'm afraid if they keep it up, this will change" (*Albuquerque Journal*, July 3, 1967).

8. The press continued to assume the hegemony of Spanish American nomenclature in its reporting of events, producing at times bizarre associations, as when it covered the rally to support the jailed Tijerina and said that "Denver Spanish-American leader Rudolph (Corky) Gonzales was among those participating in the demonstration," disregarding the fact that by this time Gonzales's epic Chicano poem *Yo Soy Joaquín* was connecting Mexican national identity to the spirit of an oppressed minority group replete with rejection of the *gachupín* (Gonzales 1972).

Whereas Spanish politicians of an earlier era might have identified with the ethnic protest, state Senator Edmundo Delgado now held that the Spanish American members of the Alianza had been “duped” by outsider Tijerina. “Those of us who have been around for a long time and who are from old Spanish families,” Delgado reportedly said, “would have made claims on that land long ago if we had thought there was any legitimate claim.” Delgado reportedly said “it was tragic that the good name of the state’s Spanish people was being blackened because a lot of good people were being led astray by a conspiracy of forces against law and order” (*Albuquerque Journal*, July 6, 1967).

Angelico Chavez challenged the Chicano claim that the Spanish-speaking heritage of the Southwest was all of an underlying Mexican piece. In a speech delivered at the 1970 inauguration of the president of New Mexico State University, Chavez painted a new version of New Mexico’s “noble poor.” The “pastoralist of the north” was indeed proud, “inordinately proud,” Chavez emphasized, but the “shepherd *ganadero*” that came from Spain was proudly individualistic, as distinct from the farming peasant from Mexico who was “industrious and plodding, but unimaginative and subdued in spirit.” Similar to Nina Otero in the 1920s, Chavez said that the Hispano was born with an “innate passion for political intrigue,” but according to Chavez, his “political fever” sharply divided communities “and even members of the same family, around election time.” Hispano New Mexico came to exist in profound isolation: “Only romantically attached to Spain, and as yet very loosely bound to Mexico, New Mexico’s people quickly accepted the Anglo American intrusion [in 1846], as it seemed to promise a better future than either Spain or Mexico had provided . . . all of her citizens of whatever economic or social level deeming themselves true and loyal American citizens.” New Mexicans had not identified with the Mexican revolution movement. “This is why, for example, New Mexicans as a whole have not risen to the call of people like the Tijerinas, who are of Mexican origin with an inborn hate of the Colossus of the North” (Chavez 1970).

The Chicano Movement took issue with Chavez. Professor Ricardo Griego debated Chavez’s historical interpretation, citing the 1848 Taos Revolt and assassination of Governor Bent as genuine resistance to the American conquest, and predicting that the people of New Mexico would preserve their culture that was “founded on a socio-political consciousness of the realities of oppression and domination . . .” (Griego n.d.).

The contention over labeling hegemony took place outside the electoral system. No overt ethnic contention occurred in the legislative chambers. Lieutenant Governor Roberto Mondragon and San Miguel District Attorney Donald "Tiny" Martinez did actively aid elements of the Chicano Movement (Sanchez 1978:98), as did some among the so-called Mama Lucy Gang that controlled the liberal Democratic legislature in the seventies.

The decline of the Chicano Movement is still open to documentation, but certainly by 1978, when the political winds in the U.S. were once again shifting direction, it no longer commanded the level of activism that it had in its peak years, 1968–1972. In New Mexico, the Spanish nomenclature survived the Chicano onslaught. The public use of "Chicano" diminished but the term entered into the Latino referencing system.

"Hispanic" Hegemony in the 1980s

The term "Hispanic" first entered the national political lexicon in 1968 when New Mexico Senator Joseph Montoya tried but failed to get a National Hispanic Week enacted (Vigil and Lujan 1985).⁹ Its resurrection in the mid-1970s came from several sources. It was used to signify a growing convergence among the several Latin American populations residing in the country (Moore and Pachon 1985:2). Presidents Nixon and Reagan found "Hispanic" politically useful for recruiting Spanish-surnamed citizens to the Republican party (Weyr 1988:87). In this latter regard, "Hispanic" served in a top-down attempt to control the politics of ethnic identification by dissociating from the militancy of "Chicano." However, as Gomez (1992) has argued, it is important to recognize that "Hispanic" was also consciously adopted by Mexican Americans, many of them former Chicano activists, who contributed to establishing this new dominant ethnic term.

In the eighties, many of the activists who had been trained for politics by the Chicano Movement developed an "Hispanic strategy." What distinguished them collectively was their professional qualifications in organizations such as the Hispanic Advisory Committee to the U.S. Cen-

9. Sierra (1980) reports that G.I. Forum founder Vicente Ximenes opposed "Hispanic" in favor of "Mexican American" at a 1969 congressional hearing on establishment of the Interagency Committee on Mexican-American Affairs.

sus, the Hispano Chamber of Commerce, and the National Council of La Raza (Gomez 1986, 1992; Weyr 1988:87–88; Choldin 1986).

The term “Hispanic” in the Hispanic strategy may have been governed by ethnic interests, but it was devoid of heritage content. As one professional activist put it, “I think that coalitions and politics are made up of issues and not names” (Gomez 1986:82). Unlike the Chicano elaborations of historical oppression and the appropriation of Mexican mythology, “Hispanic” lacked a sense of collective representation but could still be applied to civil rights issues and the aim of opening wider the doors of opportunity.

Localities reproduced professional “Hispanic” activism. In New Mexico, the G.I. Forum, the League of United Latin American Citizens, IMAGE, and the Hispano Chamber of Commerce banded to form the “Hispanic Roundtable.” A group of professional activists calling itself the *Hispanos Unidos* Organization was formed in 1985. And “Hispanics for UNM” was created to serve a Latino constituency at the University of New Mexico. These types of groups developed active agendas of community service, reaction to discrimination, and affirmative action monitoring. Within the electoral process the most significant, if not the sole, development involving active ethnic nomenclature was the affirmative action agenda established by Governor Toney Anaya (Gonzales 1993). The ‘Hispanic’ activism in the eighties reflected a distinctly liberal, rather than a conservative, orientation among middle-class organizations. Ethnic definition itself did not arise as an issue and, in fact, was avoided if possible. In this context of organizational instrumentalism (Gomez 1992), the term “Hispanic” facilitated networking by committing itself neither to “Spanish” nor “Mexican” nor “Chicano” modes of cultural heritage.

In addition to the professional level, the eighties opened up another political level which befitted the historically specific Spanish American nomenclature in New Mexico. The antitax, anti-big-government, and populist strains of the conservative revolution highlighted the local community, favored small town life, and refocused political energies and competition for state revenues in the townships (Sorman 1985: ch. 13). The effect in New Mexico was to reinvigorate Spanish American identification, not however because the current “Hispanic” was traditional New Mexican as has been claimed (Melville 1988:68)—in fact its historical source is quite different—but because conservatism turned the municipality into an active arena for the acquisition of resources.

In this context, the classic Spanish nomenclature was ignited in 1983 when an Anglo-dominated city arts board commissioned Luis Jimenez to create a sculpture for a park in Albuquerque's Old Town. Jimenez's piece, "Southwest Pieta," represented what the artist said was a New Mexican Indian man cradling an Indian woman. But critics saw instead the images of the old Mexican legend of Ixtaccihuatl and Popocatepetl, an Aztec warrior holding a maiden who has been raped by Spanish conquistadores. Old Town residents, led by a former president of the Hispano Chamber of Commerce, wanted the project scrapped because the work, being "too Mexican," failed to represent New Mexico's true Spanish heritage. In letters to newspapers and community meetings, Albuquerqueans emotionally debated ethnic history once again—Was New Mexico settler Juan de Oñate actually mestizo or Spanish?—recited statistics of the Spanish atrocities against New Mexico Indians, assigned great significance to the fact that the Spanish flag flew over New Mexico four hundred years compared to the Mexican's mere twenty-four, and so on. One writer pointed out that the "largely Anglo art community listened in somewhat befuddled silence."¹⁰ The arts board finally capitulated. The mayor found another location for Jimenez's sculpture. In time, a conventional bronze statue depicting Albuquerque's founder as a conquistador on a raised steed was placed at an Old Town entrance.

The leader of the Old Town protest said that her biggest concern was that "the people of the neighborhood weren't involved" in the selection of the art work (*Albuquerque Journal*, January 7, 1983). According to Atencio (1985: chs. 7–9), the real issue was community control, for not long before, the local residents had also rallied to their local parish's attempt to keep the mostly Anglo merchants from increasing the tourist commercialization of the historic eighteenth-century settlement district.

Meanwhile, several important grass roots organizations that had evolved out of the Chicano Movement rejected "Hispanic" for its perceived middle-class associations and because it was regarded as an external imposition on the community. They, too, chose to avoid the problems of ethnic nomenclature altogether as reflected at least in their formal names—the Sawmill Advisory Council, *Ganados del Valle*, the Southwest

10. Anna Dooling, "Is Disputed Statue 'Too Mexican'?" *The New Mexico Sun*, January 26, 1983. See also Letters to the Editor, *The New Mexico Sun*, February 6, 1983; *Albuquerque Journal*, February 2, 1983.

Land Rights Council, and the Southwest Organizing Project being prime examples.

CONCLUSION

As New Mexico heads into the 1990s, the Spanish nomenclature and iconography figure in the prominent yearly commemorations of older northern New Mexico communities (e.g., the Santa Fe Fiestas) and as part of nostalgic historical monuments and museums. The label "Spanish" continues to be expressed as a private, casual, and nonpoliticized term of reference among ordinary Spanish-surnamed citizens, including the working class (Gonzales 1992). That the Spanish nomenclature still commands political power is illustrated by the \$200,000 legislative appropriation that prominent Rio Arriba county politico Emilio Naranjo won in 1991 to erect a monument to Juan de Oñate to stimulate tourism and promote local heritage. It can be conjectured that the public political construction of the Spanish nomenclature still lies latent in many limited community and neighborhood contexts, capable of breaking out at any time. These are the legacies of that version of Spanish identity that attained hegemony in New Mexico in the opening decades of the twentieth century.

But in the current state of name pluralism, the other nomenclatures continue to find expression. One revolutionary group occupying the Tierra Amarilla Land Grant calls New Mexicans *mestizos* and prominently suggests an irredentist case for the term "Mexicano." From another quarter, university students continue the youthful militancy of the sixties, laying stress on "Chicano" as the cultural and political term for Mexican Americans in the Southwest whom they see as victims of racial discrimination and civil rights violations. Professionals continue to promulgate "Hispanic" as the term they find useful in the conventional political process.

Several general observations can be made from this investigation. Spanish identification in the early twentieth century and the Chicano construction of the 1960s suggest that Latino nomenclatures are creatively elaborated as collective representations under conditions of geopolitical emergence. The isomorphism from name to region can be quite close or approximate. By the same token, the diminishing of regional development is one of the factors that can weaken a formerly competi-

tive nomenclature, especially under a new national political ideology. A particular ethnic terminology that has lost its political moorings may remain in a noncompetitive, purely cultural form to be applied in conservative reaction to emerging competitive nomenclatures within the group, or it can await future revitalization in a new competitive arena. As the case of Senator Dennis Chavez's heavy-handed use of "Mexican" in the 1950s shows, ascendant ethnic leaders can apply disciplinary nomenclature to the ethnic community.

Social change causes heritage claims and their associated political styles to lose meaning power. "Hispanic" activists in the 1980s attempted to avoid the pitfalls of a discredited nomenclature while developing a program of categorical, if not cultural, advocacy. If the political determinism perspective holds, we can expect the next wave of creative ethnic defining to occur when a new political arena has been staked out in the life of New Mexico's ethnic community. "Latino" finds limited expression as an ethnic term at present, but it may become more important as the U.S. develops its North American Free Trade Agreement and greater relations with Latin America. ✦

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